

Claims

1. A method for operating a vending machine, whereby goods can be placed in storage compartments and can be subsequently removed from the storage compartments,

5 characterized in that

offer-related data is recorded in a central data processing unit, whereby matching offers are associated with identical offer identification codes, in that the offer identification codes are transmitted to a plurality of electronic vending machines, in that storage compartments which are provided for the distribution of goods are
10 stocked with goods, and in that offer identification codes associated with the goods are recorded.

2. The method according to Claim 1,

characterized in that

15 the offer identification codes are recorded before the compartments of the vending machine are stocked with goods.

3. The method according to one or both of Claims 1 or 2,

characterized in that

20 the placement of the goods into the vending machines is transmitted to the central data processing unit.

4. The method according to one or more of the preceding claims,
characterized in that

the filling of the compartments with the goods is displayed by means of a
graphic display unit.

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5. The method according to one or more of the preceding claims,
characterized in that
goods in individual compartments can be reserved for a certain period of time.

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6. The method according to one or more of the preceding claims,
characterized in that

data for controlling the vending machine is stored in the central data processing
unit, this data is converted into control commands for controlling the vending
machine and the control commands are transmitted to the vending machine.

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7. The method according to Claim 6,
characterized in that

the control commands change operating parameters of the vending machine.

8. The method according to one or both of Claims 6 or 7,

characterized in that

the control commands interact with an electronic control unit located in the area of the vending machine in such a manner that the selection of the available operating functions is changed.

9. The method according to one or more of Claims 6 to 8,

characterized in that

the control commands are transmitted according to an XML protocol.

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10. The method according to one or more of Claims 6 to 9,

characterized in that

the vending machine sends a request for the transmission of control commands to the central data processing unit.

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11. The method according to Claim 10,

characterized in that

the request for the transmission of control commands is repeated when an event occurs.

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12. The method according to one or both of Claims 10 or 11,
characterized in that

the request is repeated after a predefinable time interval.

5 13. The method according to one or more of the preceding claims,
characterized in that,

in the area of the central data processing unit, a procedure checks whether
changes have been made in the offer-related data stored in the central data processing
unit and/or control data, and in that, in case of changes in the offer-related data stored
10 in the central data processing unit and/or control data, a control command is
transmitted to the vending machine.

14. The method according to one or more of the preceding claims,
characterized in that,

15 in the central data processing unit and/or in the vending machine, information
about different user groups of the vending machine and information about the
selection of individual offers are stored as a function of the appertaining user groups.

15. The method according to one or more of the preceding claims,
20 characterized in that

mailpieces are transported to the vending machines, placed into at least some of
the storage compartments and stored there for later pick-up.

16. The method according to one or more of the preceding claims,
characterized in that

mailpieces are recorded by the vending machine and are placed into at least
5 some of the storage compartments, and in that the mailpieces are taken out of the
storage compartments at a later point in time and transported to a destination.

17. A vending system comprising a plurality of vending machines,
characterized in that

10 the vending system comprises a central data processing unit in which informa-
tion is stored about the goods present in the vending machines.

18. The vending system according to Claim 17,
characterized in that

15 the data processing unit is equipped with an interface that allows external access
to at least some of the information about the goods that is stored in the data processing
unit.

19. The vending system according to Claim 17,

20 characterized in that

the external access to some of the information about the goods that is stored in
the data processing unit is effectuated via the Internet.

20. A vending machine with storage compartments for storing goods,
characterized in that

the vending machine and/or a central data processing unit connected to it
5 comprises means for a flexible allocation of the storage compartments for a vending
system and/or a logistic system for sending and/or picking up goods.